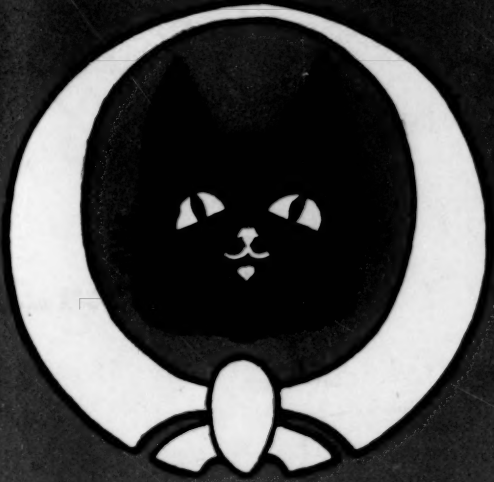
"Key to the Gate of Romance"



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Key to the Gate of Romance.*

BY DAVID BRUCE FITZGERALD.

THERE was a marked contrast between the two men who sat on opposite sides of the open fireplace, in which thin, blue flames curled upward from surface seams in the glowing bed of coke. They were alike only in being well under thirty. Professor Fillmore, the host, was tall and heavy, with gray eyes and thick, tawny hair, which curled at the ends. His bulk suggested courage and aggressiveness; but, with these qualities, he united the introspectiveness of the student and the self-consciousness of one who has lived much apart from practical affairs. In his own department of mathematics he was confident enough, feeling that he there dealt with absolute certainties and finalities; but life looked to him like an equation containing the signs of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, but in which there was no place for the sign of equality; a rather meaningless, ill-balanced jumble of uncertain quantities, among which, because it was impossible to determine their true values, it was necessary to thread a cautious way. In Columbia University, where he was an assistant professor, he was regarded as a rising man, and there was talk of creating a chair for his occupancy. Professor Fillmore felt that in this event he would ask Dorothy

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Morgan to marry him. He had been in love with her for two years, but had never been able to make up his mind that his salary and prospects justified a definite statement of his regard; and he was aware of a vague anxiety, based on a growing fear that he might eventually lose her.

Doctor Langdon, the guest, was thin, dark, alert, prematurely bald, with a lean, clearly-cut face, which habitually wore a joyous smile. He was dressed with scrupulous care, and his movements were unconsciously precise and confident. The only son of a very wealthy man, he was still doing wonders in his profession, and thereby contradicting numerous expectations touching his probable usefulness to society. His intimacy with Professor Fillmore was one of those things which can be explained only by those who understand the mystery of the attraction which human opposites exert on each other.

"As I was saying, Fillmore," remarked Doctor Langdon, "the trouble with the average student is that he walks his little round of study and investigation without ever seeing the point at which his specialty touches life. He thinks of himself as doing something apart and which is worth while only for its own sake, instead of regarding it as a key which, if he used it, would unlock the gates of romantic gardens and the doors of mysterious houses."

"You're off there, so far as mathematics is concerned," replied Fillmore. "It deals only with quantities, and has no more to do with human emotions or relationships than astronomy has."

"Your illustration is unfortunate," said the young doctor, puffing a cloud of smoke at the ceiling. "Astronomy really exercises a tremendous influence on all human affairs, from births to battles. The sun and moon have as many romances to their credit as the meadows or the forests can score. Now, since you've suggested it, take your own specialty. There is such a thing as the mathematical theory of probabilities. It amounts to the statement, which can be expressed in the form of an equation, that purely as a matter of chance any given event will happen sooner or later. But did it ever occur to you to make a practical application of this mathematical certainty? As we sit here, we are not more than a couple of miles from the very heart of New York. Well, something unusual happens in New York every minute. Tragedy

and comedy are always being played in every square. Ten thousand unbelievably fantastic events are working themselves out. Yet, I venture to say, you see little or nothing of all this. Why? Because when you go outside the door you take a predetermined course; you know exactly where you will go and what you will do; you exclude chance as a directive element in your activities. Now, if you would only make up your mind not to walk in your little, beaten path, but would give yourself up to whim, to caprice, to the passing suggestion, to the impulse of the moment, you would face life squarely, you would be let into the mystery, you would learn the occult word, the open sesame of entrance and exit at all portals."

"There is an obvious fallacy in your reasoning," observed Professor Fillmore, taking the half-whimsical remarks of his friend seriously. "If one should simply drift about New York, he would, in course of time, find himself in contact with every phase of life; but it might be years before he had his first unusual experience, and it would take him several centuries to make the entire round."

"Yes, Mr. Dry-as-Dust Professor of Mathematics. On the other side, his first day out might involve him in some startling adventure. He might witness a murder, find a valuable diamond in the gutter, be called on to assist in the elopement of an heiress with the family coachman, quiet a panic in a theatre, and have his picture in all the papers next morning; do no end of bizarre things. Between you and me, and merely as a matter of curiosity, I'm going to try it sometime."

"So am I," said the Professor, with the slow, reflective accent of a scientific man coming to a conclusion. "Saturday will be my first free day, and I will give it up to the experiment. I will have a certain professional interest in noting the outcome, though I haven't the least expectation of finding myself involved in an adventure."

"Good for you, old chap," cried Doctor Langdon, rising. "I wish I could go with you, but I happen to have an important engagement for the forenoon of Saturday. However, come and dine with me at the Twenty-first Century Club at seven o'clock, and give me an account of your experiences."

Fillmore promised.

"I suppose you realize the necessity of making yourself the mere sport of events," remarked Langdon, drawing on his overcoat.

"Meaning?"

"That if anything points a way, take it; if any one offers a suggestion, accept it. When in doubt, flip a coin or read a billboard for advice. Don't try to set a course. Simply let yourself drift."

"Yes; I understand that."

"Well, good luck to you; and don't forget to come to dinner;" and Doctor Langdon, smiling to himself, ran down the steps and sprang aboard his automobile.

Professor Fillmore lived in a small hotel in Brooklyn. On Saturday morning, after breakfast, he left the house, and was immediately confronted by the question of which way to turn. Standing on the curb, he glanced up and down the quiet street, but could fix on nothing which seemed to indicate a direction. While feeling in his pocket for a coin, he was accosted by a shabbily-dressed man, who asked for five cents to pay his way across the ferry. The request conveyed an unmistakable suggestion. Instead of tossing the nickel in the air, Fillmore placed it in the mendicant's hand, and himself took the next car going in the direction of the East River.

Forty-five minutes later, as he was sauntering up lower Broadway, Fillmore encountered the same man; and, on the basis of their slight, previous acquaintance, the fellow immediately addressed him.

"You see, Colonel," he remarked, "I used that nickel you gave me just as I said I would. You don't happen to have any work I could do for you? No? Well, if I don't find anything in this end of town, I'm going up to Forty-third Street, and I think I can git a job."

Professor Fillmore was aware only that the man had mentioned a certain thoroughfare. Forty-third Street! Well, in the absence of any other intimation of how his wanderings should be regulated, he would go to Forty-third Street. The silliness of following indications derived from the casual remarks of a street beggar occurred to him, but he resolutely declined to consider that phase of it. So far as his experiment was concerned, the pointing of a straw was

as significant as an unexpected request to visit the President of the United States.

"Cab, sir?" said a voice at his ear.

Fillmore had thought of taking the elevated, but it was plainly not intended that he should. On that particular day, an invitation was equivalent to a command.

"Yes," he replied, turning toward the open door of the vehicle. "Drive me to Forty-third Street."

"All right, sir," said the man, closing the door on his fare.

The cab was blocked a time or two before it succeeded in reaching the clearer side streets, but Fillmore, who was reading a morning paper, took no notice of the delays. There was no imaginable reason why he should be in a hurry. Indeed, absorbed in a long editorial on the Eastern Question, he was rather surprised at the shortness of the time before the vehicle drew up at the curb and stopped.

"Here we are, sir," said the driver, opening the door. "This is the house."

"But I did not tell you to drive me to any particular house," replied Fillmore, quickly.

"You didn't?" returned the man with obvious bewilderment.

"I certainly did not. I merely directed you to take me to Forty-third Street."

"Well, sir, I can't say how I came to make the mistake of thinking you mentioned a number; but I guess there's no great harm done."

"I will get out here," said the Professor, suddenly realizing that, because mere chance had brought him to it, this particular house was directly associated with his experiment. He paid and dismissed the cabman; then turned and carefully scrutinized the tall front of the residence before which he had been set down. It was a typical New York house of the better class; it stood in the middle of the block; it was precisely like its neighbors on either side; and it did not present a single feature which conveyed a message to Fillmore's mind. But either he must abandon his experiment or try to enter the house. Had anything less important than the attempted application of a mathematical theory been involved, the Professor would never have found courage to mount

the steps and ring the bell, but, with the feeling that he was engaged in verifying or disproving the correctness of a famous and accepted equation, he did not hesitate. Because it was the first name which occurred to him, he resolved to ask for Mr. William Smith; of course expecting, after being told that Mr. Smith did not live there, to have the door closed in his face. This, however, would not break the continuity of his experiment; whereas failure to seek entrance to the house would. He pushed the button; and presently the door was opened by a stolid-looking butler.

"Does Mr. William Smith live here?" Fillmore asked, boldly.

"Yes, sir," replied the butler, in a matter-of-fact way.

"Is he at home?" The Professor clutched desperately at the chance, amounting to a probability, that he wasn't.

"Yes, sir. Please step into the library, and I'll tell him you are here."

"I — I haven't an appointment with him," Fillmore gasped, horribly conscious of the entanglement into which he had stumbled.

"No, sir; but he said he particularly wanted to see you in case you called."

"It's Professor Samuel Fillmore." The caller pronounced his own name with marked distinctness, assured it would convince the butler that he was not the person whom the master of the house was expecting.

"Yes, sir; Professor Samuel Fillmore. I'll let Mr. Smith know you are here, sir."

Fillmore dropped into one of the leather chairs in the heavily furnished library. He was too flurried to consider the extraordinary coincidence involved in finding a man whose name corresponded with one of which he had casually and hastily thought. All his faculties were bent to the invention of a reason which would satisfactorily explain to the real William Smith why he had sought entrance to his house, for it was clearly some one else who was expected. During five or ten minutes of waiting, the caller debated the question of whether it would be better to profess that he was looking for another and quite different William Smith, and had been misled by an address in the city directory, or whether a frank statement of the experiment he was making would be understood by Mr. Smith, and would be regarded by

him as a sufficient excuse for the intrusion of an entire stranger. These deliberations were inconclusive, but were cut short by the entrance of a tall, elderly man, whose white hair and mustache strongly accentuated a naturally distinguished personality. His dark, searching eyes gleamed beneath bushy brows, his linen was immaculate, his long frock coat was carefully buttoned. He was the embodiment of straightforwardness and respectability.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Fillmore, rising, and quickly determining that this man's intelligence, though acute, was not of the scientific type, "I fear I have made a mistake. You are not the Mr. Smith for whom I was looking."

"Still, I am glad to see you, Professor Fillmore," replied Mr. Smith, extending his hand. "However, I unfortunately have an appointment I must hurry to keep, and you will excuse me if I mention at once the matter I have in mind. I am going to entrust to you, Professor, a somewhat valuable little package of papers. After you leave this house, please take the first cab you find, drive to the St. Catherine Hotel, in Brooklyn, and ask to be shown to room thirty-seven. When you have locked yourself in, open the package and examine its contents. Remain in the room until two o'clock this afternoon; then leave the hotel by the front door, and walk east on the right-hand side of the street. I believe that is all, except to deplore the trouble to which I am putting you."

"But, my dear sir," cried Fillmore, struggling with an amazement he was unable to express, "there is some grave misunderstanding on your part. You are entirely unacquainted with me, and I can imagine no possible reason why you should entrust me with a commission, especially one which, as you have intimated, involves some responsibility."

"I assure you there is no mistake, sir," returned Mr. Smith, with the tone and manner of one discussing the most ordinary matter of business. "I understand perfectly what I am doing. Of course, if you are not willing to undertake the commission, I cannot insist, but I am of the opinion that you will find it to your advantage to accept my suggestions."

"Perhaps I should explain that I am in a peculiar position, which will not allow me to decline any suggestion made to me

to-day," said Fillmore. "If I do as you say, it will be entirely because I am engaged in applying a certain mathematical theory to practical affairs."

"That is at once beyond me and quite unnecessary," replied Mr. Smith, with a smile which seemed to express regret of his inability to follow the special intellectual processes of his guest. "Here is the package of which I have spoken."

He placed in Fillmore's hand a large, stout manila envelope, sealed, but unaddressed, and containing a somewhat bulky enclosure. The Professor hesitatingly weighed it between his thumb and finger; then thrust it into the inner pocket of his coat. Mr. Smith, with unfailing courtesy, accompanied his guest to the door, and cordially wished him good-day. Fillmore found a cab at the second corner; and, during the drive back to Brooklyn, could think of nothing except the astonishing revisions which his experiences promised to make necessary in the sphere of the higher mathematics. The accepted theory of probabilities would certainly not account for the remarkable series of fortuitous incidents he had encountered; and, so far as he was able to determine, other equally mysterious links were yet to be added to the chain. He wondered whether, by prolonging his experiment, by taking it up day after day, by devoting the next long vacation to it, he could accumulate factors for an equation which would show the true chance element in everything. The strangeness of his reception at the house in Forty-third Street, the identity and motives of Mr. William Smith, the conjectural contents of the manila envelope, the extraordinary instructions by which he was to regulate his movements during the remainder of the forenoon and at least a part of the afternoon, were all subordinate, as subjects for consideration, to the purely professional interest he felt in the problem presented to his mind. He was not a very imaginative man, and he wasted no time in mere aimless groping through a fog-bank of mystery, or in seeking fantastic explanations of obscurities.

In the unpretentious office of the St. Catherine Hotel, which was much like the one in which he lived, Fillmore asked whether he could have room thirty-seven for a couple of hours.

"Are you the gentleman who reserved it yesterday by telephone?" inquired the clerk.

"My name is Fillmore," was the guarded reply.

"Yes, sir, that's right; Professor Fillmore. Here, Charley, show the gentleman to thirty-seven."

As Mr. William Smith's intimation had prepared him for this development, Fillmore was not greatly surprised. He followed the bell-boy to number thirty-seven, a small, comfortably-furnished parlor, with an alcoved bedroom attached. After locking the door and lighting a cigar the Professor seated himself at the centre table and tore the end from the manila envelope. What he found temporarily stupefied him. The envelope contained twenty-five one-thousand-dollar bills. There was also a written inclosure; a note, penned in a heavy, angular hand. It read:

NEW YORK, January 23, 1904.

PROF. SAMUEL FILLMORE, Brooklyn.

Dear Sir: You are possibly not aware that, some years ago, your father was swindled out of twenty-five thousand dollars by a man who is now a client of mine, but who prefers that his identity shall not be disclosed. Purely as a matter of conscience, this person now desires to make restitution; and he begs that you will consent to refrain from investigating any of the circumstances of the case.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM SMITH.

As he read, and repeatedly reviewed, this note, so curt in its phraseology, so brusque in its brevity, so unsatisfactory everyway, except in its explicitness, Fillmore felt that it would be impossible, at the moment, to assign this new and extraordinary circumstance to the place it should occupy in his experiment. The bills on the table dragged him down, as he admitted to himself, to a non-reflective and purely emotional plane. With his simple, scholarly tastes, twenty-five thousand dollars meant to him independence. He dwelt on this for a moment; then his thoughts flew to Dorothy Morgan. He had always hesitated about asking her to marry him, because — well, merely because his salary had seemed so inadequate, in view of the possible emergencies of life in New York. Multitudinous small establishments, as he was aware, were supported on less than he annually received; but he had never understood how men and woman dared thus to tempt fate or providence or whatever they called it. But would not a reserve fund of twenty-five thousand dollars eliminate the element of foolhardiness? After setting down some rows of figures on the

back of the manila envelope, Fillmore decided that it would. It did not occur to him to question his own right to the money. True, he had never heard of the transaction to which Mr. Smith referred in his note; but he was aware that his father, during the later years of his life, had met with heavy losses, which had reduced him to poverty. These twenty-five thousand dollars probably represented an unfortunate investment in some company which existed only on paper; and the conscience-stricken promoter was now endeavoring to reimburse his victims or their legal representatives. It was an unusual, but not unimaginable, proceeding.

Fillmore quickly reviewed and dismissed this phase of the situation. To the other side of it, that which related to Dorothy Morgan, he devoted a much more careful and prolonged consideration, the outcome of which was a decision to call on her that very evening and ask her to marry him. Of course, until the matter was settled between them, he would say nothing to her about the money which had so mysteriously come into his possession. It would not do to create on her mind the impression that his proposal was in any way due to elation following a sudden windfall.

In accordance with Mr. William Smith's instructions, Professor Fillmore remained in the room at the St. Catherine Hotel until two o'clock. Then, after assuring himself that the money was carefully stowed in his pocket, he descended to the street and turned eastward. His mind again reverted to his experiment; and he confessed to himself a keen curiosity to learn what the next development would be. Indeed, because it seemed to have no special significance, he was quite impatient of an incident which momentarily detained him. This was the offer, on the part of a street gamin, to sell him a dog for fifty cents. Fillmore, who had no place to keep a dog, would gladly have declined; but on this particular day he had no option in the matter. He hastily put a half-dollar in the urchin's hand, took the cord which was attached to the dog's collar and went on, leading his purchase, an alert and handsome, though exceedingly dirty, white bull terrier. Thus, attracting more attention than he liked, Fillmore traversed seven or eight squares. Then, when he was least expecting it, he encountered Dorothy Morgan.

"Why, Professor Fillmore, where did you find Trek?" exclaimed the young woman, ecstatically, stooping and gathering the bull terrier in her arms.

"Is that Trek?" he asked, noticing the dog for the first time.

"Why, certainly. He was stolen yesterday; and you can imagine my despair. Early this morning, some one who declined to give his name called me up by telephone, and told me that if I left the house at two o'clock and walked westward along this street I would find my dog; but I didn't expect to discover him in your custody."

"I bought him from a small boy, a few squares back," said Fillmore; "but I really hadn't the least notion he was yours. I have been devoting the day to a sort of mathematical experiment, about which I will tell you another time, and the purchase of the dog had something to do with it; but until you recognized him I had given him hardly a second glance. I am more than glad the thing has turned out as it has. It's rather curious, though, about that telephone message. I did not get my instructions in the same way, but I myself was asked to leave the St. Catherine Hotel at two o'clock and walk eastward along this street."

"Oh, I see it," said Miss Morgan, quickly. "The person who stole Trek didn't want to face me; so he arranged to put the dog in your care, and planned that I should meet you very soon afterward, before you disposed of him or lost him."

"That seems the obvious explanation," Fillmore replied; "but it unfortunately doesn't happen to fit all the circumstances of the case. For example, the man who gave me my instructions was one whom I couldn't possibly associate with the theft of the dog."

The girl, her mission accomplished, turned homeward; and Fillmore, walking by her side, dismissed from consideration everything except the fact that he was desperately in love with her and that the money in his pocket endowed him with a new, strange confidence. Less than half an hour before, he had said to himself that he would take the first opportunity to propose to her, and he could see no reason for declining it because it had presented itself sooner than he had anticipated. The precise wording of his declaration has no place in this story, it being quite sufficient to say that Dorothy Morgan arrived at home with a furious blush on her

face, and that Fillmore, neither asked nor forbidden, went up the steps and into the house with her.

When, an hour later, Fillmore left the home of the girl who had just promised to marry him, it was with the intention of returning at the earliest possible moment. He had told Dorothy that he would break his engagement to dine with Langdon at seven o'clock; but she had insisted that he keep it, assuring him that if he did not linger at the table there would be ample time afterward for an evening call. At the first corner, Fillmore turned into a cross street to reach a car line. About the middle of the block, he was overtaken by a stranger, who addressed him:

"Professor Fillmore, I represent the Redington Detective Agency, and I have instructions to bring you to our New York office right away."

"What for?" Fillmore spoke sharply. It irritated him to have his dream thus rudely interrupted.

"I haven't an idea," replied the stranger, with the blandness of a big, good-natured man. "The superintendent simply said he wanted to see you."

"Suppose I decline to go?"

"In that case I would have to arrest you, sir. I have the authority to do it; but I hope you will see that it would be better not to let things go to that point. As it is, I'm merely asking you to take a little drive with me."

"Well, come on and let's get it over," said Fillmore, suddenly recalling his experiment. He had, quite unconscious of the fact that he had been thinking about it at all, taken for granted that his proposal to Dorothy Morgan, which was not fortuitous, but premeditated, had terminated the series of chance happenings for the day; but it seemed that in this he was mistaken, and he very readily entered a cab with the detective. Aware that he had violated no law, the young professor was not in the least apprehensive. He regarded the cab merely as a vehicle which was to carry him further toward the goal of an important discovery.

At the New York office of the Redington Detective Agency, which was on the fourteenth floor of a skyscraper, Fillmore was introduced to Mr. McLoughlin, the superintendent, a short, fat man, with a red face and an expansive smile.

"Please be seated, Professor," said Mr. McLoughlin, pointing to a vacant chair beside his desk. "I regret the trouble to which we have put you, but it was absolutely necessary. This morning, you had a rather curious adventure. In a house on Forty-third Street, a certain Mr. William Smith placed in your hands an envelope which contained twenty-five one-thousand-dollar bills. Of course, you were, and are, unaware that the money was stolen."

"Stolen!" Fillmore exclaimed. "Why, Mr. Smith said — but stop, here's the note I found inclosed with the bills."

The superintendent read it and laid it on his desk.

"It's a sad case, Professor," he said, "and we are trying to keep it just as quiet as possible. For many years, Mr. Smith was associated with one of the large financial institutions in this city. Recently, it was discovered that, at various times within the last six months, he has appropriated large amounts of money to his own use. The strange part of it, as our investigations have shown, is that he simply gave the money away, usually to mere acquaintances or entire strangers; always inventing some pretext which, as in your own case, led the receiver to think that the money actually belonged to him. Our information is to the effect that you merely happened to enter Mr. Smith's house this morning. Well, I will venture to say that Mr. Smith never heard of you before you passed his threshold, and that this note was written after the butler had told him your name. I am confident also that investigation would show that your father never met with any such loss as is mentioned here. In short, Professor, Mr. Smith's mental condition is a source of great anxiety to his friends. Possibly you noticed something queer about him."

"The whole affair impressed me as decidedly queer; but it did not occur to me that Mr. Smith was insane," Fillmore replied. "However, since you suggest it, I regard it as a very probable explanation. Of course, under the circumstances, I wish to return the money to its owners. I presume I may place it in your hands?"

"Certainly. I will give you a receipt for it," said Mr. McLoughlin. "My object in sending for you was to recover this money and, at the same time, to shield both Mr. Smith and yourself. I need hardly say that not the slightest suspicion attaches to

you in this affair and that no hint of it will ever be dropped outside this office. I am very grateful for your courtesy in coming to us."

It would be untrue to say that the necessity of parting with the twenty-five thousand dollars did not cause Fillmore's spirits to sink to a degree perceptible to himself; but his depression was neither so marked nor so prolonged as it would have been if he had not realized the wonderful fact that he was engaged to Dorothy Morgan. Indeed, he was quite cheerful as he hastened home to dress to keep his appointment with Doctor Langdon.

"I'm going to cut this short, old man," Fillmore said, as the two seated themselves at the table. "You will understand why, when I get to that point in my story;" and he rapidly sketched the events of the day. Langdon listened interestedly, interjecting occasional comments. When, in the course of his narrative, the Professor announced his engagement to Dorothy Morgan, the Doctor stretched forth his arm and grasped his friend's hand.

"I congratulate you, Sam," he said. "That's the best piece of good fortune that is ever likely to come your way. She is one of the finest girls in the world, and I have always hoped you two would manage to hit it off."

"It means, of course, that Dorothy and I must somehow manage to live on my salary," Fillmore observed, reflectively, after detailing his visit to the office of the Redington Detective Agency, and the surrender of the twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Why not?" Langdon asked. "Lots of people get along comfortably on less."

"Altogether, I have had a remarkable day," said the Professor, in an evident hurry to be off. "As you must see, the indications are that chance plays a much larger part in all affairs than is supposed and that the accepted theory of probabilities is erroneous; but it will be necessary for me to make repeated experiments before announcing this as a conclusion, or attempting the construction of a new equation."

. . . . . .

Some months after the marriage of Professor Fillmore and Dorothy Morgan, Doctor Langdon, one afternoon, dropped into the apartment they occupied.

"Where's Sam?" he asked, after greeting his hostess.

"He is out somewhere, trying to verify or disprove the theory of probabilities," replied Mrs. Fillmore, who had already caught certain technical phrases from her husband. "I don't believe it will ever come to anything, and I'm trying to make him give it up; but he absolutely declines to be persuaded."

"I wouldn't think of interfering with him," said Langdon. "It's the best thing in the world for him. Gives him the exercise that every professional man needs; takes his mind from his routine work; is beneficial every way."

"Doctor Langdon," said Mrs. Fillmore, suddenly, darting an inquiring glance at the face of her guest, "I've always wanted to ask you how much you know about Sam's remarkable experiences on the day he first set about testing the theory of probabilities."

"I guess he told me everything that happened," he replied.

"No, I don't mean that. Rather, what part did you have in arranging that certain things should happen to him?"

"Aren't you drawing your bow at a venture, fair lady?"

"Not entirely," she returned, with an amused little smile. "For example, I have always known that you bribed a boy to steal my dog."

"Heavens! What a charge!" cried Langdon, affecting horror.

"Still, a true one," Mrs. Fillmore said, decisively. "Our postman happened to notice and recognize the boy who made off with Trek; and the policeman on the beat afterward captured him. The urchin, when the officer brought him to see me, asserted that you had given him two dollars to steal the dog, and another dollar to stand at a certain place, on the following day, and offer him, at a ridiculously low price, to a young man whom you minutely described, and said would pass that way within five minutes after two o'clock. Do you deny it?"

"No," replied Langdon, with a grin. "I confess everything. You see, I wanted Sam to have a really enjoyable day; and I think he did, as practically everybody he ran against was acting under my instructions. However, that wasn't all of it."

"What else?" said Mrs. Fillmore, inexorably.

"Well, if you must have it, I knew that Sam was dead in love with you, and that the only reason he hadn't proposed was that he was dependent on his salary, which he mistakenly thought wasn't

large enough to justify setting up an establishment. I wanted to see what would happen if, with twenty-five thousand dollars in his pocket, and believing it his own, he should suddenly encounter you. As you will easily understand, it was necessary to work out a plan for the day with minute attention to the harmonizing of every detail. The problem which troubled me most was that of bringing you and Sam together at just the right moment and in precisely the right mental attitudes. I found it difficult to hit on a way of sending him to your house, or, if I should succeed in this, of insuring that he would find you at home. Finally, I devised the idea of stealing your dog and of having Sam return him to you. I reasoned that his confidence and your gratitude would bring about a speedy understanding; and the event indorsed the infallibility of my method.

"No, please don't attempt to thank me, Mrs. Fillmore," he continued, facetiously, and with a volubility plainly intended to cover his retreat toward the door. "The occasional contemplation of your happiness amply compensates me. I have but two regrets. One touches the theft of your dog, which must have caused you great anxiety; and the other is that I couldn't afford to let Sam keep that twenty-five thousand. However, you have both completely recovered from these shocks. I pledge you my professional word that there has not been, in either case, the slightest impairment of the nervous system. Still, it is well to be cautious. Think it over before you let Sam into the secret of that adventurous day. Remember the risk involved in using a man's pet hobby for kindling-wood. Yes, thank you, I will drop in again soon. Good day, Mrs. Fillmore."

As he went down the stairs, Doctor Langdon wondered whether the pink flush which Mrs. Fillmore showed was due to rising indignation or to suppressed mirthfulness.

Star-Eyes.*

BY W. T. FERNANDEZ.

HAD just returned from extracting a .44 from the anatomy of one "Topty" Sullivan—the slug having been presented to him in the regular line of business, running a faro lay-out with stacked cards, by another eminent citizen known as "Silver Dick"—when I spied the Sheriff of Sweetwater County cantering down the street in my direction. He swerved toward me and, flinging himself out of the saddle, sang out: "Hello, Doc', old boy. How's tricks?"

"Oh, so so, Bill, so so," I replied, as I led the way into my office.

"Say, Doc', your medicine's mollifyin' to human nature!" exclaimed the Sheriff, soon after, smacking his lips, "not to mention the steadin' effect it has on the trigger finger. Now, would you consider that a sure enough proper gimcrack for a young girl on her sixteenth birthday?"

As he spoke he handed me a watch suspended from a gold clasp by three bars of rare workmanship in virgin gold. The clasp showed in low relief, a frontiers-man bending over a huddled figure; the first bar, a soldier and a woman before a priest—evidently a wedding; the second bar, a soldier kneeling at the bedside of a woman whose head was turned toward him; and the third bar, an officer falling at the head of a charge of infantry. The watch itself was a beauty, with the initials "D. C." in pearls, and on the inner case an inscription, "To Star-Eyes, from Uncle Bill."

Passing it back to him, I remarked: "Well, Sheriff, she'll be hard to please if that doesn't tickle her fancy. But who's the lucky young lady?"

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"Sit down, Doc', and I'll tell you the yarn."

I promptly laid away the probes I had been cleaning, and, making myself comfortable, prepared to be entertained. The Sheriff's yarns were never dull and often exciting. He knew men, loved horses, and honored women, and was big-hearted, square all the way through, and the quickest man with a gun I have ever seen. Watching the smoke rings curling from his pipe for a few moments, he began:

"It was about eighteen years ago, when Miles was a-chasin' Sitting Bull an' just keepin' that old heathen on a middlin' lively jump. If he sat down to have a smoke, there were Miles' 'dough-boys' a-comin' down the pike, just hittin' the high spots an' their Springfields banging at every jump. I was scout with the outfit, an' having a little personal matter to settle with that crowd — they'd wiped out a pal of mine the year before — I took a right lively interest in keeping them on a move that wasn't much short of bein' swift, and that's how I came to meet Star-Eyes.

"We'd tramped all day through the snow, with the thermometer so low that the mercury was tryin' to crawl out of the bottom of the glass, an' were havin' visions of a good feed of bacon and black coffee, when a Crow scout came in from the left with word of a village in that direction that'd stand beatin' up. Of course, old 'Beaver Coat,' as the reds called Miles, couldn't stand off that temptation, so off we goes to the left an' proceeds to make things lively for the red brother.

"It was a good-sized bunch of wickiups we stirred up, an' after a pretty fair scrimmage razooed them into the hills, from which they peppered us all night, without doing much damage. Well, along toward morning we pushed them back into the hills, an' as I was working up a ravine ahead of a bunch of the boys, what should I stumble over but a body more than half covered with snow. Thinkin' it was a dead Injun I was about to pass on when it moved. 'Hello,' says I, 'He's alive; I'll just pack him back to the 'saw-bones' — no offence, Doc' — an' have him looked over!' I kicked the snow away an' pulling off the blanket saw — a wounded buck? Not much, but an Injun girl, an' as pretty as a picture. There's mighty few good-looking Injun women, and they're always more'n half white, but they sure are beauties when

you do find 'em. This one was about seventeen years old, an', as we learned later, was half white. I picked her up in my arms an' started back toward the village with her. Meeting some of the boys on the way, I told them of my find an' passed the word for the Doc'.

"He was soon on the ground an' sings out in about a minute, 'Why, she's been hit.' In a jiffy he had his knife out an', slashing away the buckskin jacket, bared her left arm and shoulder. 'Bout, face!' bawls old Gallagher, sergeant of "D" company, 'I've a gur-rl of me own.' You see the Doc' was so used to pulling the shirts off wounded men, an' we'd got so interested in our find, that we didn't quite twig what he was doing until that delicately tinted arm an' shoulder were bared. There we stood with our backs to the Doc' and his patient until he sings out, 'All right, boys. Slip an overcoat on a couple of rifles an' fetch her down to camp; we'll pull her through all right, I guess!'

"We got an ambulance up from the main column a few days later an' sent her in to the fort. Well, you know how we chased 'Sitting Bull.' He just hit the high spots in the Northwest country that season an' it was a mighty lucky thing for him that some cuss hadn't moved the Canadian line or we'd a-got him sure an' the result would 've been most unhealthy for him. As it was, the manner in which we camped on that old gentleman's trail has made Injun raids unpopular in that section of the country ever since.

"Getting back to the post some months after finding 'Star-Eyes' in that ravine — she'd told the Doc' that was her name when he first asked her; it seemed the reds called her that on account of her eyes, an' they were eyes, Doc' — I found her a graceful, slender young woman and the pet of all the women in the post. I also discovered that Dick Crane, who had laboriously built up a reputation as the laziest, cussedest soldier in the garrison, had suddenly chucked wine, women, and song an', with three stripes on his arms, was the example of the post. Now, Doc', when a fellow makes a flop like that you can always bet that he's either had a good fright or there's a woman in the case, an' we weren't long in locatin' the woman in *that* case. He was just head over ears in love with 'Star-Eyes' an' didn't give a cuss who knew it,

an' when a fellow gets it as bad as Crane had it, he's got it pretty darned bad.

"We couldn't figure out just how the lady took it, an' so the whole post settled down to watch the game, an' a mighty pretty sight it was to see them strolling outside the stockade, she with the grace of a deer an' he a typical regular, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped, an' as straight as a ramrod.

"I was rather chummy with Crane, an' Star-Eyes always insisted on callin' me 'Uncle Bill,' so sometimes I'd go with them on their walks, an' so gradually learned her story. As near as I could make out from what she remembered, her mother had been a Clicatat and her father either an Englishman or a Dane, as she said he was very blond an' had blue eyes. She didn't know much of her history, but could remember coming down from the North with her parents when she was three or four years of age, an' as they travelled a long time, I figured they must have come from British Columbia. She said her mother was not dark like the women in Sitting Bull's village, but was much lighter, an' pretty. Now there's only one tribe in the North that such a woman could come from, an' that's the Clicatats; a tribe noted for its good-lookin' women an' big men.

"She remembered camping alongside a big river one night an' noticed her father seemed uneasy an' didn't come into the tent as usual, but remained outside with the ponies. Toward morning she was awakened by shooting an' war whoops of a party of hostiles that had crossed their trail an' followed it. Her father was killed defending his wife an' baby, an' she an' her mother taken prisoners. They were separated during the night, an' she never saw her mother again. The Injuns took good care of her until about a year later, when the cavalry swooped down on them one night, an' in the stampede she was forgotten an' was found by the soldiers in the morning, who didn't know just what to do with her until a black-bearded man spoke up an' said: 'Give her to me; my wife's coming out from the East shortly, an' as we haven't any child of our own we'll take this baby an' make her ours.'

"That man, Robert Halstead by name, told her afterward how they had found her that morning, an' how he had a soldier's wife

at the fort take care of her until his wife joined him on his ranch. She'd lived with them for twelve or thirteen years when they were butchered by Sitting Bull's crowd in the campaign we'd just closed. Taking her alive, old Bull discovered in some way that she had Injun blood in her an' saw that she was respected an' protected, as he intended to give her to War Eagle for a squaw, an' so patch up an old feud between himself an' the young chief. We'd kept him hopping around so lively, howsomever, that he didn't get a chance to have a pow-wow on the matter, an' that's how it stood when we jumped his village that night. Star-Eyes had been trying to get to our lines when she was fired on an' hit by one of our pickets, who probably mistook her for a buck tryin' to sneak in close enough to pot an outpost.

"'But suppose we hadn't come along when we did, an' you had to marry War Eagle?' I asked her one day. 'Uncle Bill,' she said, 'I had a knife, long an' sharp, an' women of my race know how an' when to use a weapon of that kind.' An' she'd have done it, Doc', just as sure as we're sittin' here, for that's the kind of stuff Star-Eyes was made of.

"Well, things went along for a couple of months more without any show-down, until one day Crane was sent with a detachment down to the settlement, to fetch in a gang that had overstayed their leave an' were reported as good an' plenty drunk an' takin' the aforesaid sattlement apart to see what made it tick. About nine o'clock that night one of the detachment got back, on a mule of the ambulance they had taken with them, with word of a fight an' a request from Crane for the Doc'. A few minutes later a second ambulance, with a cavalry escort, was splittin' the wind in a manner to give a jack-rabbit the snakes. All we knew was that the boozologists had put up a fight an' some one had been shot. It was daylight when the outfit got back, with Crane an' one of his men wounded, in one ambulance, an' the gin party lashed fast an' packed in the other.

"Miss Star-Eyes, with one of those woolly shawls over her head, had been watchin' the trail since before daylight, an' was the first to spot the wagons coming back. Her eyes must have been much better than ours, for she missed Crane from among the escort before we could distinguish one man from another of the

guard. I noticed a deep flush run up under her creamy-tinted skin and die away, leaving her face colorless. Her hand rested on the rail at the top of the foot-way along the top of the stockade, and clenched the wood until every tiny blue vein showed through the soft skin.

"'It's all right, little woman,' I said; 'He's probably inside with the prisoners!' 'He's wounded,' was all she answered, an' down she flew to meet the ambulance. Right there is where the Injun cropped out. No hysterics, or faintin' or yelping around; she gave one look at his face, then took her place alongside the stretcher as they carried him into the hospital. He'd got a .38 through the lungs an' was sure in a bad way. Well, sir, that girl did nothin' the first two nights — the Doc' told me after — but just hang over Crane's bed an' tend to him, an' when he began to show signs of comin' around, she promptly skipped out an' went back to the major's house, where she lived as a companion to the major's wife, who was delicate.

"But as soon as Crane found out where he was, he wanted Star-Eyes, an' back she went to the hospital. Well, they settled it while he was laid up, for as soon as he was on his pins again, the women got mighty busy, an' Star-Eyes, with a good many blushes, asked me if I would be her official father at the wedding.

"We fetched the Padre up in style from the settlement, an' held the wedding in the mess hall. It just beat your swell affairs to a pulp, Doc'. The boys had scoured the hills for days before for wild flowers an' evergreens, an' the hall was filled with 'em; a stack of rifles stood on either side of the bride an' groom, an' a great bell of pine nettles, with crossed sabres, hung above them. The post band started the ceremony with the 'Star-Spangled Banner,' filled in the middle with the wedding march, an' wound up with 'Garry Owen,' an' if there's any better tune to get married to, or to fight to, than 'Garry Owen,' I haven't heard it. The colonel kissed the bride, an' the bride kissed yours truly, sayin', 'That's for finding me in the snow for my husband,' an' shootin' a glance at Crane that would've cleared the Kicking-Horse pass for a transport train in January.

Then a full troop escorted them to the railroad, twenty miles away, with the whole garrison whooping an' sowing the trail

with the commissary rice. We got them aboard all right an' just as the train pulled out Star-Eyes kissed her hand to us, an' every galoot turned loose with all the artillery on him; we just tore things loose around that shanty.

"Somehow, the post didn't seem the same after they left. She was always doing little thoughtful things for everybody, an' many a man felt the sorrowful reproof in her eyes, after he'd been on a bat, more than he did the colonel's anger. She'd just raised the moral tone of that outfit about fifteen points, an' we were a lonesome bunch without her.

"They were away about a month, an' durned near the whole garrison met them at the station when they came back. If she was pretty before, she was just twice as pretty when they returned — there was a kind of happiness shinin' all around her that did our hearts good to see, an' we summed up that Crane was about the luckiest man this side of the great divide. The colonel made him a 'Top' sergeant an' told him if he didn't dig in an' get a commission he'd kick him out of the service. Crane didn't need any spurrin' in that direction, an' in a year's time he had his lieutenant's straps an' a little Star-Eyes in his home, an' was more in love with his wife than ever.

"I was the youngster's godfather, an' was in continual trouble 'n account of feeding her candy an' other sweets which her mother said spoiled her, an' I suppose she knew more about it than an old bach' like me. I was getting out the timber for some additions to the post an' was away in the hills almost every day. One evening when we got back, we saw something was wrong. There was a crowd around the hospital door an' a guard of about a hundred men around the guard-house. A few questions an' we knew the reason. Star-Eyes had been stabbed by a rum-crazed half-breed that used to hang around the post, doing odd jobs. Crane was with her, trying hard to control himself, an' the heavy guard was on hand to prevent the men tearing her murderer to pieces.

"'Pears that as she passed the entrance to the tunnel leading to the post magazine a little earlier in the afternoon, she missed the sentry. Thinking that strange, she entered the tunnel, to almost fall over the body of the man, whose skull had been

crushed. At the same instant, catching a glimmer of light around a bend of the tunnel, the thought struck her that some one intended mischief. Stepping quietly forward, she saw the half-breed, with a pine-knot torch in one hand, fumbling at the lock of the magazine with the other. Knowing that every instant that torch sputtered there was an excellent chance of the whole outfit being blown to kingdom come, she slipped up behind him an', grabbing the torch from his hand, turned to run with it.

"Quick as a cat the half-breed was after her an' catching her just as she reached the entrance, screaming for the guard, drove his knife to the hilt into her back. Staggering a few steps further she fell outside the entrance as the guard came up on the double. With a blow of his rifle-butt the corporal sent the half-breed into a heap an' it gave them all they could do to club back the enraged troopers from the murderer as their lieutenant's adored wife was carried to the hospital; an' 'twas just about all the officers could do to land that fellow in the guard-house without the men tearing him limb from limb.

"Poor little woman! She died that night in her husband's arms. She had sent her love an' farewell to 'her boys,' an' asked me to be a father to her baby if anything should happen to her husband. 'You know, Uncle Bill, I would wish him to come with me, but I must not be selfish, an' the waiting will not be as long for me over there as it will be for him.'"

The Sheriff paused, then, violently blowing his nose, swore roundly at the dryness of the cut plug in his pipe. The smoke *did* affect one's eyes, until we discovered that the pipes had been out for some time.

"The colonel an' the major," continued the Sheriff, "with several other officers an' their wives came in an' talked with her for a few minutes. She was growing weaker rapidly, an' suddenly the Doc' whispered to Crane, who'd been praying at the foot of the bed. We left them, an' an hour later it took two orderlies an' the Doc' to unfasten his arms from around her body. They led him out, staggerin', blind to everything but his loss.

"We laid her away in a shady corner of the post cemetery an', a few weeks later, hung the half-breed. He confessed that in a drunken fit he had intended to blow up the fort in revenge for

punishment the colonel had handed out to him for stealing forage, but claimed that fire-water had bewitched him, an' if it did, it also hung him — an' a cussed good job, too.

"I went into ranchin' after that an' didn't see much of Crane. I'd get a letter now an' then, an' writing back send some little thing for the baby.

"We talked about Star-Eyes the last time I saw him. He was a heartbroken man, Doc'; grizzled an' gray before his time an' only looking forward to meeting his wife again.

"'It's long waiting, Bill,' he said, 'I feel her near me at times, an' she looks at me from her child's eyes, but it's long waiting.'"

The Sheriff noisily knocked out his pipe and, standing up, shifted his belt.

"But his waiting's over now, Doc' — Crane found his Star-Eyes at Santiago. Yes, sir, an' he met her with a colonel's eagle on his shoulders an' a Mauser bullet plum between the eyes. That's why the pictures are on those bars, Doc', 'cause this gimcrack is going to my ward, Miss Dorothy Halstead Crane — but I most generally call her Star-Eyes."

In the Cane-Belt.*

BY JULIET BAYNE.

THE September sunlight lay warm and mellow on the dark soil of the cane-belt; on lands fallow since wheat harvest, and longer; and on the broad green of cotton-fields separated from one another by the zigzag lines of rail fences, gray and decaying. Tones of red and yellow showed here and there in the belts of woodland. The circling hills wore the purplish haze which in these latitudes appears with the first waning of the dry midsummer heat.

Gordon King, from the long front gallery of the white two-story house, was looking out half absently at the soft melancholy of the landscape, his gaze returning at intervals to the gaunt, smoke-blackened chimneys showing through a grove of oaks on a hill a half mile away. They were all that war had left of the Chessney homestead. Since its destruction the family, neighbors of the Kings for half a century, had moved into town. Only the night before he had been present at Florence Chessney's marriage. He had always thought, in the old days, that he should marry her himself. He wondered now that he should feel so little bereft. The four long years of battle, the strange confusion and bitter political evils which had followed, had sobered his vision. In the future that now stretched before him Florence Chessney could have had no fitting place; perhaps none was there for any woman. He sighed a little without being conscious of doing so.

Twelve strokes sounded out in slow resonance from the tall clock in the hall. Gordon walked to the eastern end of the piazza. A few minutes later a negro man, walking beside a wagon loaded with fodder, came up from the low-grounds and drove his team through the wide gate leading to the barn and stables. From the

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field across the road an old woman, her head wrapped in a yellow kerchief, took down one or two of the low bars and followed, bringing with her a white-oak basket piled high with cotton. The long rows she had left showed but little signs of her morning's industry; brown balls were bursting with whiteness in the warm sunshine, from others long tufts trailed wasting on the black earth. Hard as it had been to get the crop made, it was even more difficult to get hands enough to gather it.

Gordon was calling some directions to the negro, Adam, when the sound of wheels was heard and a small one-horse wagon stopped at the front gate. The occupants made no move to get out, and he turned and went down the broad walk to see what they wanted. Both were plainly dressed, but a glance at their faces showed him that they had been accustomed to better conditions than present appearances indicated, and when the man spoke his voice was sweet and finely modulated. "Dinner is just ready," Gordon said. "Come in and eat with us, and then you can make known your business."

But the man declined. "I only wish to know if you will let me the house about a half mile back of your place," he said. "I understand it belongs to your estate."

"The house is unoccupied," King replied with some hesitation, "and has been for two or three years. Not much need of an overseer now," he added with a slight smile. "You say your name is Marwood? That's not an Alabama name, I believe."

"No, we are not of Alabama, sir," the stranger said in a manner which precluded further questioning.

King looked into his countenance. It was a volcanic face, in spite of its feminine cast. Passion was there, lack of self-restraint, a strange restlessness, but not falsehood nor treachery.

"Would you and your wife want a house set back so far from the public road as that?" he asked. "You know there are no neighbors for five or six miles, except my mother and myself. You would find it very lonely. I should think a place nearer town would suit you better."

A swift anger flashed for an instant in the man's dark eyes. "I suppose I can judge for myself what pleases me," he said haughtily.

But the woman interposed. "It is rather a lonely place," she said, speaking for the first time, "but we would not mind that; and the little grove around it seems rather pretty. I think we could soon make the house habitable." Her face, young and delicately beautiful, was pale from some recent suffering, and there was an anxiety in her manner which, however it might strengthen his suspicion that he was brought into contact with some mystery, appealed to Gordon's heart.

"You may have the house," he said, "although I could wish it were a better one; and there are some odds and ends of furniture stored away in useless corners of our house which my mother would be only too glad to send up to you if they would be of service."

There was a look of relief on the woman's face. "Perhaps you would be willing to give us the key," the man said, "and let us drive up there at once."

Again Gordon King experienced a little shock. "The house would be scarcely fit for your wife to go into now," he replied, "having been shut up so long. I will have it put in order, and perhaps a few repairs made, and you can take possession Friday or Saturday."

He repeated his invitation to dinner, but it was again declined, and the strangers rode away. In a few days they were established in their new home, but when they had lived there a year Gordon King and his mother knew no more of their past and but little more of themselves than on the day when they arrived. They neither wrote nor received letters, made no visits and had no intercourse with any one except the Kings, and that but seldom. The latter, indeed, would have willingly been friends with the young couple, but their advances were repelled in a manner as decisive as it was gracious, and the kindnesses they were suffered to render were but few. Marwood exhibited a fierce intermittent energy, working for days at some means of support and then leaving his wife to finish what he had begun. Then, when the period of lassitude and disgust had spent itself, he would return to his work, and so it happened that their necessities were met. The rich soil easily supplied them with garden products and they made something from the small orchard attached to their place and from their

poultry. The wife had some knack for domestic affairs and seemed to find a modicum of happiness in these simple interests. It was as if her nature inclined to put forth tendrils of affection about whatever might surround her, which were chilled in their growth by her husband's sudden outbreaks of ill-temper and his frequent despondency.

"They seem somehow to have no object in life," Mrs. King said to her son, "when they ought to be in the heyday of its enjoyment. Marwood seems older, but I do not believe the girl is more than seventeen, and so lovely." But she made no effort to discover anything which the new-comers seemed inclined to conceal.

The summer after their arrival Marwood was sitting one day in the wide hall of the Kings' residence consulting with Gordon upon some matter of business. The drawing-room doors were open and King observed the eager look in the young man's eyes as they turned more than once to the piano standing opposite.

"Perhaps you play, Marwood," he said. "It has been a long time since the piano was used, but I shall be delighted to hear it again if you feel disposed to try it."

Marwood appeared to restrain his eagerness with something of an effort and went quietly to the piano, at first touching the keys slowly and caressingly. And then the impetuosity of his undisciplined nature asserted itself, and all emotions, from tender sorrow to a fierce triumph, found expression in the strains which he drew from the instrument. Mrs. King came softly into the room and sank into a chair to listen and the servants gathered about the door with awe and delight on their faces, but the young man played on as if unconscious of any auditors.

Suddenly he stopped, closed the piano, and turned to Gordon. "But you did not tell me the price of the peaches," he said, as if there were no such thing as music or passion in the world. His face was quite pale, and circles seemed to have gathered under his dark, restless eyes.

Mrs. King laid her hand gently on his arm. "Mr. Marwood," she said, "you have given us a great pleasure. I hope you will use the piano again, and quite as if it were your own."

But her son's forehead had on it that little frown which came there only when he was puzzled and displeased.

At another time, some months later, Marwood and his wife, finding the solitude of the long winter evening intolerable, as they sometimes did, went through the wooded path to spend the hours till bedtime with their neighbors. They found Gordon with his father's great leather-bound Shakespeare on a table before him, reading aloud to his mother.

"Do not let our coming interfere with your plans for the evening," Marwood said. "If you have another copy convenient, I will try some of the parts with you."

But Gordon laughed. "Here, take the book," he said, pushing it to the opposite side of the little table. "If your dramatic talent equals your musical gifts, I have no mind to risk my poor abilities in any such competition."

Marwood drew the volume towards him, his long nervous hands slightly tremulous. It was open at "Othello." "Yes, but not tragedy!" he said lightly. "We have enough of that here in Alabama."

He turned the leaves rapidly until he came to the "Merchant of Venice," and, rising to his feet, he began reading aloud at the second act.

Gordon had heard the play in Montgomery when he was a very young man. The bewildered delight of that evening came back to him now under the spell of Marwood's voice. He drew away from the lamplight and sat with his face in shadow, borne away in spirit to far-off lands of wonder and beauty.

Mrs. King drew a long breath as the reader finished the play and took his seat. "Dear Mr. Marwood," she cried, "you do indeed 'drop manna in the way of starved people.' But really one might guess that you are as great a trickster as Portia herself, hiding away your talents here in this lonely cane-belt."

The anger which seemed always to be slumbering just under the changeful expression of Marwood's countenance leaped suddenly to the surface. Gordon was confident that he discerned, mingled with it, an acute, overmastering fear, and he hastened to cover his mother's mistake.

"He makes us all feel as if we were under a disguise," he said lightly; "poor princes depriving ourselves of our real heritage in these working clothes of care."

There was a rush of feeling to the young wife's delicate face which neither Gordon nor his mother could read. The latter turned to her. "Bring your husband to see us often," she said, "and we will 'fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world,' before there was any war and poverty."

When their guests were gone, the puzzled frown came again to Gordon's face. "Marwood ought to provide for his wife differently from what he is doing," he said. "She tries to make the best of her surroundings, but one can see her youth and hope are giving way under the strain."

"Some paralysis seems to have fallen upon the man's will," his mother replied. "It is he, and not his wife, who is wearing himself to an early death."

"Something is wrong, I tell you, mother," Gordon returned irritably, "and I won't be a party to it any longer. Marwood is capable of something better, and he ought to be driven to it."

"These are strange times, my son," the old lady said gently. "Our whole social fabric has suffered a great shock. If phenomena appear here and there which cannot be accounted for, it is not to be wondered at. These poor young people have found a refuge here, and are doing no one any harm — unless it be each other," she added with a sigh. "Be patient with them, Gordon; you will see the end of it after awhile."

It was soon after this that Mrs. King's health, frail for some years, began to give way rapidly. Needing more attention than her son could give her, engaged as he was with the affairs of the plantation, and opposed to having a strange attendant, the invalid depended more and more on the skilful and willing ministries of their young neighbor. Marwood, besides being in one of the moods when solitude was more agreeable to him than companionship, seemed glad for his wife to repay in a measure the consideration shown them, so she was at the house much of the time, Mrs. King beginning to call her by her first name, Edna, and coming to regard her almost as a daughter.

The early spring was at hand, bringing a thousand sweet odors and fair colors to the woods and fields. In the wide front yard the boxwood put out leaves of pale glistening green, flowering quince blushed a rosy red, and narcissus and daffodils scented the

air. Something of the same fresh bloom appeared in Edna Marwood's face and manner. The tender mystery of a hidden grief, which had added to the peculiar charm that was nature's own gift to her, passed into a quiet satisfaction, lighted often by a mirthfulness even more alluring.

"When Edna sings for me, I forget my pain," Mrs. King would say, and Gordon himself often stopped to listen while the girl played the simple piano music that had been his sister's, or sang the old-fashioned songs which she used to sing in the same sweet girlish voice. Her presence in the house gave a new flavor to his uneventful life, and without his realizing it he came to depend upon her voice and smile as much as did his mother.

She tried to bestow something of the care upon the house which it had always received from its mistress, and he stopped one morning to help her as she was tying up the shoots of a young rose vine that was growing around one of the pillars of the long front gallery. There was a flush of color on her delicately moulded cheek, the light breeze stirred the rings of brown hair about her forehead; she seemed an integral part of the morning freshness and beauty.

The vine was adjusted to its place; she stepped down from the chair, and stood looking out for a moment at the landscape with its soft springing life faintly veiled under a tenuous blue haze. "It seems a pity for all this delicate loveliness to pass into summer," she said. "I wish it might always stay as it is."

"I have often felt so myself," he answered, at one with her mood. "But spring this year seems particularly beautiful. Perhaps it is always so, but I cannot remember that I ever enjoyed one quite so much before."

A sudden, fearful consciousness of why this had been so swept over his being like a flood. He averted his eyes from hers instantly, but not till he had seen a swift shamed misery quench their clear light. The warm blood swept over her face and neck. "Your mother must be needing me," she said unsteadily and turned away from him.

He had seen the rapids before them, as one older than Edna Marwood, and it was only because his hand was steady and his heart pure that he could so quickly turn back his craft from the luring, treacherous abyss. Even as he did so, he felt sick and

wounded. This sweet woman, under other conditions, might have been as the light of earth to him, and he must put her away from even his thought. And she, too, was suffering, with a suppressed, hidden, innocent suffering for which he felt to blame.

Perhaps his mother understood. "Gordon," she said a day or two later, holding his hand with the caressing dependence that he loved, "I think you had better take me to some specialist in the North. Adam can be trusted with the laying-by of the crops, and some family in Selma will be only too glad to hire the house for the summer."

It was arranged as she suggested, and among new scenes, and with the anxiety that he felt for his mother to take his mind somewhat from himself, Gordon King tried to adjust himself to the strange sense of loss which haunted his heart. The operation which the New York physicians found necessary was entirely successful, and after some weeks he and his mother started homeward, stopping on their way to visit a college mate of Gordon whose mother had also been a dear friend of Mrs. King in her girlhood.

"This world is a very little world, after all," Gordon said to Robert Dunnington, as they had their first talk together, carrying it far into the night. "Do you know, Robert, when I carried mother to the hospital, the first physician I saw was Henry Bizzell? Don't you remember how much we saw of him that winter that you and I spent in Paris? How the years seemed to melt away as we stood together again! And, oh! how he did work to save mother. It was as if he were her own son."

Dunnington's face answered the expression of his friend's with warm sympathy. Never was a woman better worth saving than Mrs. King!

"Yes," Gordon repeated in a softened voice, "it is a little world and a kind one. I don't know how many unexpected meetings I had in New York, where I had thought myself an absolute stranger. Why, one day I happened to take a seat in a street car right by the surgeon of our ward when I was a prisoner at Elmira in '63. I used to get pretty mad with him then, but I was glad to meet him again. And he seemed pleased to see me as soon as he could bring me back to mind. I rallied him about having so poor a memory, and he said that nobody could be expected to recognize

a skeleton which had taken a notion to clothe itself in flesh again. I suppose I do look a little more like a human being than I did then."

Dunnington smoked meditatively. "Yes, this is a little world," he said slowly; "and yet now and then somebody manages to lose himself in it very successfully — quite as much so as if he had gone to another planet. There was a strange case of that kind among some people who lived in this very city. The family was named Courvoisie. The father was a rich planter who lived a few miles down the river. At least he was rich before the war, and just at its close he managed, through one of his agents, to buy up a lot of cotton, and when the price rose to fifty cents a pound he had nothing to do but set himself up again. Not on his plantation, of course. He came to town and opened a bank and lent money to other people less fortunate. For a year or more he prospered wonderfully, and then there was a crash. Who it was went wrong, nobody ever knew. The cashier managed to get away, having first destroyed the books, and that same night Courvoisie killed himself; so no one could tell what really did go with all the money. Speculation, I always believed. Courvoisie had got the taste of it and could not stop."

Dunnington relighted his cigar. "But that's not all. Years before, Courvoisie had met a beautiful actress in New York and had persuaded her to marry him. Whether she was happy or not, I don't know. She died after seven or eight years, leaving two daughters, one an infant. The elder daughter grew up, a tall, splendid looking woman, inheriting her mother's versatile talents and a great deal of her beauty. But she had also a strange, restless disposition, always thirsting for adventure, and a temper so sudden and violent in its outbreaks that every man she knew was afraid of her. Actually, the things that girl said and did before she was twenty years old have gone into the traditions of half the watering places in Virginia."

For some reason Gordon King felt his pulses quicken, but he made no comment, and Dunnington proceeded with his story:

"Of course she had a great many admirers, but not, I think, a single real lover. And she chose to fasten her affections — with what intensity you may perhaps imagine — upon a young man not

at all her equal. I don't believe he ever loved her, but the girl had so compelling a way that he hardly knew how to escape from her, if I may say such a thing. But when her father killed himself and she was left penniless — it was known that she had given up everything in sacrifice to the family honor except a few jewels which had been her mother's — she offered him his freedom, and he promptly accepted it. That was the extreme drop of bitterness in the cup. Miss Courvoisie disappeared, nobody knew where, and nobody ever has known. It was soon after the war, and people were too busy looking after their own affairs to keep the poor girl in mind. It was generally believed that she would go on the stage, but she never did."

"I believe you mentioned a younger sister." Gordon struggled to keep his voice free from the excitement he felt.

"Oh, yes; certainly. She went with her sister, of course. It was said that in spite of the difference in their ages and temperaments, they were very devoted to each other. Mamma always thought that, but for the family misfortune, the younger girl would have made an even more brilliant social success than her sister, although of a different sort."

Gordon sat with his fingers clenched hard together, trying to speak.

"Now, isn't it strange whatever could have become of those two girls?" Dunnington concluded, rising to light his companion to his room.

Gordon turned and going to the window looked down at the black waters of the river with a pale sheen of light glistening and wavering upon them.

He stood there a moment with his face to the warm darkness of the night. "Do you happen to remember the younger sister's name?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," Dunnington said. "She was a great friend of Hallie's when they were children. Her name was Edna."

The New Minister.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

JUDITH QUIMBY, spinster, was a thorn in the side of the body-social of Watervale, for Judith Quimby, spinster, owned the only church in that little village — she had inherited the edifice from her father, who had got it by foreclosure — and being the proprietor of the church-building she had taken it upon herself to dictate the views of the clergy who should hold forth from its pulpit.

Judith Quimby, spinster, was a Baptist, and so also were the divines engaged to wake spiritual thunder in the pulpit of her church. Watervale likewise was Baptist, *but* Judith Quimby's eagle nose was a sensitive spiritual thermometer, which she thrust into the depths of each of her clergyman's wells of faith, and if that thermometer registered the slightest variation of a degree from the temperature of her own wells of faith, then Judith Quimby, spinster, arose, accused the unhappy clergyman of heresy, showed him to the door of her favor, and drove him forth peremptorily. In a year she had dismissed four men of God.

It would seem that the good people of Watervale might have taken into their own hands their spiritual peace and welfare, engaged that particular divine who most pleased them, and have set him to preaching from an improvised pulpit in a barn, if need be; but ah! what is an ordained minister, what even a religion, without a spired, cupolaed church? No! their clergyman must preach from a regular pulpit in a regular church edifice, and Watervale being too needy to erect a house of worship of its own, needs suffer all the inconvenience and vexation visited upon it by the eccentricities of the owner of the one church in the village — Judith Quimby, spinster.

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The month of August, embracing five Sundays, passed, and during this no inconsiderable period Watervale remained wholly without public religious edification, whereat the villagers began to murmur, but Judith Quimby set her thin lips and stood firm. The Lord, in good time, would send a minister of true orthodoxy, she assured her townspeople, and better that He should forget their needs than that the village should be corrupted by heresy. Better no prophet than a false one.

The first week in September came and went, and it began to look as if Miss Quimby herself would have to fill her empty pulpit, when her deacon, Timothy Watts, Esq., received a letter bearing the postmark of a city in Michigan.

Breaking the envelope, he perused the following amazing communication :

MR. TIMOTHY WATTS, Watervale.

Reverend Sir: —

Learning that you are the deacon of the Baptist Church of Watervale, we take the liberty of introducing ourselves to you.

We are known as The Clergyman, Church and Choir Supply Company, and are incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan. We are prepared to supply the public with clergymen of every denomination, and all shades of the same. Our correspondent has informed us that your village is at present in need of a Baptist clergyman. May we have your permission to submit samples? It will cost you nothing for examination, and our terms for the goods, delivered, will be as follows: One hundred dollars a year, payable quarterly in advance.

The clergyman chosen by your constituency will preach one timely, original sermon each week, with opening prayer and benediction, and be kept in working order at our expense.

Only fine-looking clergymen in stock, and we call particular attention to the fact that all sermons can be examined before delivery, and edited to suit the tastes of the congregation.

We furnish choirs, too, in all languages and at the most reasonable prices.

We also are prepared to furnish portable or non-portable churches, at the shortest notice.

All religions constantly in stock, and new forms and rituals constantly added.

In case you should wish to consider our proposition further, we will be pleased to mail you our handsome illustrated catalogue, or, better still, have our agent call in person upon you.

Trusting to receive an early order, and guaranteeing you the highest satisfaction,

We subscribe ourselves,

THE CLERGYMAN, CHURCH, AND CHOIR SUPPLY COMPANY.

"Well, I swan," exclaimed Deacon Watts, removing his glasses and rubbing the indentation that they had made in the bridge of his nose; "this beats me!"

Again the man of peace perused the typewritten communication, then, folding it carefully, placed it in his pocket and went over to Judith Quimby, spinster, for further light.

Two hours later Deacon Watts posted a letter directed to The Clergyman, Church and Choir Supply Company. Judith Quimby had commanded that unique company to send down an agent to Watervale with samples of Baptist clergymen and the terms for a choir of two male and two female voices: "For while we are about it, deacon," snapped Miss Judith, "we might as well see if we can get a choir that can praise the Lord, without scratching each others' eyes out at the same time!"

The following Tuesday an agent of the C. C. and C. S. Co. arrived and with the aid of her deacon, Judith Quimby finally arranged with him for a clergyman and a choir of four voices which she thought would prove quite satisfactory. She then posted a notice to the effect that her church would open on the following Sunday, with clergyman and choir engaged at her own expense, and invited every one to attend.

Sunday came, and with it came the congregation to listen to the new clergyman and the new choir. What manner of man would the former be? And the choir? Really, Judith Quimby must be at ruinous expense to bear the whole cost out of her private means.

At precisely ten o'clock Deacon Watts stepped forward and opened the door leading from the vestibule to the church, and the congregation entered the house of worship. The new clergyman and the choir were there before them, the divine standing in his pulpit, the choir seated on his right.

A murmur of surprise and pleasure broken from the congregation. What a noble clergyman! young, handsome, saintly; everything a pastor should be! And the choir — what a fine-looking group! One could almost see their perfect voices in their intelligent, spiritual faces.

The congregation was now seated and, lifting his outstretched hands, the new clergyman opened the morning's worship with prayer and then immediately chose his text and delivered his sermon. The little flock held its breath in admiration: never before had it heard such a sermon as this — a masterly searching

out of the vanities of these latter times, delivered in a rich, sonorous voice, and with true Baptist fervency. Verily, a summer of spiritual glory had descended upon the village of Watervale!

"The choir will now sing the forty-seventh hymn," directed the new clergyman, and at once the choir arose with open hymn-books and, taking the most graceful attitude, rendered the song in consummate style; then, decently, soberly, Christianly, without staring at face or bonnet among the congregation, sat down.

Judith Quimby was triumphant — her townspeople elated, amazed, curious.

The new clergyman now arose and, speaking in a more familiar tone than heretofore, introduced himself to his flock as the Reverend Richard Bonifield, and trusted that only the highest esteem and affection would ever exist between himself and his congregation. Then, lifting his hands, he spoke the benediction, and immediately afterwards the congregation arose and made its exit to the vocal music of the choir.

In the vestibule Judith Quimby was instantly surrounded, to be congratulated by every one upon her choice of a new clergyman, and thanked for her noble services and, with a questioning inflection, her great expense. Miss Judith bowed condescendingly, but still her townspeople lingered.

"Really, dear," burst out little Mrs. Pinchin, dying with curiosity, "but we cannot go until we have shaken hands with the new minister, and thanked the choir for their beautiful singing."

Judith Quimby swept out her arms, making a little open space, the better to address her audience, and began: "It is impossible, friends, that you meet the new minister or thank the choir. Impossible! I repeat. The Reverend Richard Bonifield, and his charming choir, are not frail flesh and blood, as we are; they see not as we see, hear not as we hear, feel not as we feel; your flatteries cannot touch them, nor your heresies corrupt; they are above the follies and illusions of this little world. In fact, my friends, you have to-day listened to a sermon and to religious singing rendered by servants of a new and incorruptible church. At last have Christian souls found the perfect choir and the perfect minister! The Reverend Richard Bonifield and his choir are not men and women, but steel and wax figures — worked by our

deacon — and within each of these figures is a phonograph, the records of which have been and will in the future be edited by me, so that hereafter we shall have the true faith delivered in the true way. Friends, I wish you a very good morning this blessed Sabbath day, and I assure you that you will always be welcome to this incorruptible church which I have established in your midst. One word more — hereafter there will be no collection, except that for foreign missions.

The Turning Worm.*

BY EMMA C. WOOD.

SOLD Dolly to-day," Mr. White said, with a sidelong glance at his wife, as he rode into the barn lot.

"Jonas!"

"It's no use keepin' a dry cow, Sereny, an' Harvey Jones offered me a good price for her, so I thought I had better take it."

"But Dolly seems like one of the family," his wife answered in mild protest. "I declare at times she acts 'most like a human. What's he goin' to do with her?" she added quickly.

"Keep an' feed her well," he said.

"I hardly feel as if I could let her go," Mrs. White said, thoughtfully.

"The stock here now are eatin' their heads off, so what's the use keepin' a dry cow? I'll give you the money to buy that hat you was wantin' the other day," added her husband hastily, noting the look of dissatisfaction on his wife's face — "the one with all them flowers an' fixin's on it at the mil'ner's."

"I'm needin' a hat, goodness knows!" admitted Mrs. White, waveringly. "I've been wearin' the one I've got, three years this coming May — puttin' feathers on it for fall an' winter, an' flowers an' ribbons for spring an' summer, till I'm tired an' sick of the sight of it, an' I reckon other folks air, too."

"That one we saw was a reg'ler stunner," insinuated Mr. White, adroitly.

"Yes, an' I'd like powerful well to have it, only I don't feel as if we ought to sell Dolly. She'll get homesick, goin' to a strange place."

"Fudge!" cried Mr. White. "I never seen such a woman. You don't want the trees cut down, ner the fool flowers grubbed

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up, an' half the time you hate to kill the chickens, because you've petted 'em," he added in an injured tone.

His wife gave a little sigh as she thought of her childless lot, but made no answer.

The next day when Harvey Jones came to drive the cow away, Mrs. White ran up-stairs and threw her apron over her head to shut out the sight.

However, when Dolly bawled in loud protest as she was driven through the yard, her mistress could stand it no longer, but rushed to the window and called out after the retreating horseman — "Mr. Jones! Mr. Jones! you must promise me to take good care of Dolly. You must, indeed!"

"Of course," answered Harvey Jones, "I'll see that she gets plenty to eat," and he winked gravely at Jonas White as the promise was made.

A week passed by. It was a long and lonely one to Serena White. Since the day Dolly had been driven off, it really seemed as if a member of the family had gone away. Jonas White could never understand the vacancy her going had left in the simple, plodding life of his wife.

Even the possession of the coveted hat did not compensate for the loss of Dolly. Mrs. White began to regret that she had ever consented to the parting — indeed, had she? She had simply held her peace and let it occur.

Dolly was her very own cow, too. Mr. White had given the calf to her when its mother died, before it was even weaned, and Serena White had partly brought it up by bottle. No wonder she had become so attached to the gentle creature.

Jonas had tried to laugh his wife out of her soft-heartedness, but the feeling of regret still remained.

During the following week a neighbor dropped in one morning, on her way to town, and in the course of the talk she said:

"An' so you've sold Dolly? I shouldn't have thought you'd be willin' to have her taken to the cattle-pen, seein' you've made such a pet of her."

"The cattle-pen?" echoed Mrs. White in surprise. "I don't know what you mean."

"My Jim was at Curley's distillery the other day, where they

air sloppin' cattle to fatten 'em for the market, an' he saw Dolly there. He hardly knowed her, though, she looked so or'nary. It 'pears to me ag'in nature to feed cattle on that slop," continued the visitor, as her hearer made no reply. "They was created to eat the grass of the field — the Bible says so — an' to have to swallow that bad-smellin' stuff is enough to turn anything's stomach, especially a cow's when she's been used to good sweet meadow-grass an' hay. No wonder Dolly wouldn't touch it for days an' days. They had her chained to a trough."

"Chained! Dolly chained!" Serena White sat bolt upright in her chair, and her voice ended almost in a wail.

"Yes, you see when some of the cows won't drink the slop, they chain 'em at the trough until hunger an' thirst forces 'em to. I've heard it runs some of 'em mad. It seems a cruel thing to do, don't it?"

Serena White looked at her visitor in a dazed sort of way, and nodded her head.

"Air you sure it was Dolly?" she stammered, at last.

"Why, la! yes, Jim knew her, though she looked that thin an' pitiful. I felt most certain you didn't know about it."

Scarcely had her visitor gone, when Serena White hurried out and hitched up the horse to the light buggy. On the way townward there seemed but one recurring thought to her perturbed mind, and she found herself again and again giving voice to it.

"Dolly in chains!" Dolly, who had never had a harsh word spoken to her in all her life on the farm, who was as gentle and docile as a lamb!

Serena White's eyes grew misty as she looked out across the Kentucky fields and meadows, green and sweet with the presence of May.

How fresh and lush the tender grass lay on the hillsides, and the young buds on the trees seemed to have burst into sudden leafage at the touch of a magician's wand.

Dolly had spent her whole tranquil life amid such scenes of verdure and peacefulness, often knee-deep in clover, and with the cowslips and violets tangled amid the dewy grass where she was wont to graze — and now? Something like drops of sultry rain fell into Serena's lap as she drove along.

When the town was reached, she went at once to Curley's distillery, and, as she expected, she found her husband lounging about the place. It was a favorite loafing spot for the neighborhood.

Jonas White made no secret of his surprise on seeing his wife, but along with it there was a certain embarrassment of manner.

"Where air the cattle-pens?" Mrs. White asked briefly.

"Who told you Dolly was here?" he questioned in return.

"I didn't learn it from *you*," she answered with emphasis, as she climbed out of the buggy.

"If you just follow your nose, it will take you straight to the pens," suggested one of the loungers with a laugh. Indeed, there came at the moment, on a passing wind, a strange, sour, sickening odor, that offended her nostrils where she stood.

"It ain't a fit place for a lady to go," asserted Jonas hastily.

"From the way it smells, it doesn't seem a fit place for any human — or a beast either," answered Serena White, "but I'm goin'."

There was a positiveness in his wife's tones altogether new to Jonas, and, vaguely puzzling, he humbly followed in her steps.

To the west of the distillery were the cattle-pens, a long, double row of low wooden sheds, down the center of which ran a line of troughs in which the slop was fed the cattle.

The air was reeking with a sickening odor, a smell of sour, fermenting slop, damp, foul floors, the steaming bodies of the cattle, chained so closely together at the troughs that each beast had only room to crouch in an uncomfortable position on the slimy floor when it grew tired of standing.

Thus they are slopped — these mild-eyed, docile creatures, born in shady vales and pasture-lands, now held by captive chains for dreary weeks and long months, through the sweet, alluring spring far into the torrid summer. Here they are imprisoned, unable to exercise, within sight of grass-carpeted fields and sweet-smelling meadows of clover, fed on hot slop, which many refuse at first, until hunger compels them to eat, without a drop of cool water to allay a feverish thirst that the hot slop creates, and having to endure this dreary captivity until an artificially made plumpness prepares them for the market.

As Serena White went into the sheds, one cow had got her chain

entangled in the horns of a fellow-captive, and was trying to regain her feet, but at each effort her hoofs slipped on the wet floor, and she would fall again to her knees, only to be kicked by a brutal keeper to urge her to another attempt at regaining her feet.

"Stop it!" cried Serena, shrilly. "Undo the chain!"

At the sound of her voice, the poor beast turned its head as far as the chain would permit, and bellowed piteously. Its hair was matted and filthy with the stains of the floor, around its neck the iron chain had worn off the hair and rubbed into the flesh, while only a short, stubby tail poorly served to drive off the flies that swarmed throughout the shed.

Serena White felt her heart go out in pity toward the poor creature as she looked at it, then the next moment she suddenly gave a loud cry almost as piteous as the beast had uttered: "Dolly!"

At the name, the forlorn animal struggled once more to gain a foothold on the dank floor. It partly arose to its feet, when the shortened chain jerked it to its knees again, bruising and skinning them afresh, and so it lay trembling and moaning like a thing of human suffering.

Straightway Serena White flung herself down on the foul planks of the floor, unmindful of their foulness, indifferent to the unsightly stains upon her dress, her whole mind centered on the helpless object of her pity and affection.

"Dolly! Dolly!" she cried, tugging at the choking chain.

By this time the keeper of the pens had unfastened the end of the chain attached to the trough, and in kindlier manner assisted the woman and then the cow to their feet.

Jonas stood by, uncomfortable, and uncertain what to do. His wife's next words advised him of what she intended to do.

"Take off that chain!" she said to the man.

"But, Sereny," her husband expostulated, "we've sold Dolly. She ain't ours, you know."

"She was *mine,* an' you sold her, an' got the money for her. Now *you* can buy her back."

"But," began he. She interrupted him.

"Jonas White, listen to me! I've been a good and dutiful wife to you. Look at these hands! They're hard an' rough, workin' for you. I've helped you to pay for the farm, an' to buy the cattle